



Kentucky Artisan Center at Berea

Tourism, Arts and Heritage Cabinet

Lanette Freitag Demonstrates the Felt Loom at Kentucky Artisan Center at Berea

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BEREA, Ky. – On Saturday, Nov. 23, Lanette Freitag, of Sharpsburg, will demonstrate felting wool on a table-top felt loom from 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Kentucky Artisan Center.

Born in Ohio, Freitag fell in love with rural Kentucky during summer visits to her paternal grandparents' farm in Estill County. After graduating from Ohio State University, Freitag became involved with technology, working for various corporations before transferring to Kentucky in 1984. While she was working, Freitag and her family bought increasing amounts of land.

"We went from two acres in New Jersey, to 26 acres in Nebraska, to a 110-acre farm in Michigan, Freitag said. "I eventually left my corporate job, and now along with my husband manage a farm operation with cattle, sheep, llamas and alpacas on 370 acres near Sharpsburg."

Raising llamas and alpacas along with a variety of sheep including merino, Lincoln, Cotswold, and Karakul, Freitag soon realized that the beauty of the wool from these animals could remain intact and visible if felted. She initially created rugs and scarves by felting her wool by hand with a simple felting needle. Because wool fibers have barbs on them, the felting needle—which has barbs along its length—catches, twists and connects wool fiber barbs together to create a durable felted fabric.

Because the hand-felting process is very labor intensive, Freitag and her husband put their heads together and invented an automated felting loom.



"I always had an interest in having a product that was sustainable from the farm – something that we could grow on the farm and sell retail . . .," she said. "So my husband and I invented a wool felting machine to make the fibers marketable. We can now turn wool fibers into wide lengths of felted wool which in turn can be used like fabric to create clothing."

Freitag's table-top felting loom

Freitag will be using a table-top version of their felt loom in her demonstration at the center.

After washing and drying the wool, Freitag runs it through the felting machine. The felt loom is automated with many rows of felting needles working together to speed up the process. She uses the finished wool fabric to create clothing such as jackets, vests and wearable felted wool stoles. Freitag often attaches the natural curly locks of her sheep's wool as a fringe on her garments.

Works by Freitag are regularly available at the Kentucky Artisan Center at Berea, located at 200 Artisan Way, just off Interstate 75 at Berea, Exit 77. The center's exhibits, shopping and travel information areas are open daily from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., and the cafe is open from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Admission is free.

Celebrating 10 years in 2013, the center currently features works by more than 650 artisans from more than 100 counties across the Commonwealth. Special exhibits on display include, "Capturing the Art of

Sport: Works by Kentucky Artisans,” through Feb. 22, 2014. The center lobby features an 18-foot Christmas tree decorated with sports-themed gifts and ribbons in university team colors of red and blue. For more information about the center’s events call 859-985-5448, visit us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/kentucky.artisan.center, or go to the center’s website at www.kentuckyartisancenter.ky.gov.

The Kentucky Artisan Center at Berea is an agency in the Tourism, Arts and Heritage Cabinet of the Commonwealth of Kentucky.



Photos, left to right: Lanette Freitag attaches the curly wool from her sheep to a felted wool rug; a felted wool shawl with curly wool fringe at the Kentucky Artisan Center at Berea